



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH NAPLES

October 31, 2019

Dear brothers and sisters in the Southern Baptist Convention,

Recently, many of you have heard about the sad, unfortunate occurrences at First Baptist Church Naples. On the weekend of October 26 & 27, Marcus Hayes was brought before our church by our Senior Pastor Search Committee in view of a call as our next Senior Pastor. It should be noted that Marcus Hayes is an African-American. It should also be noted that Marcus Hayes is absolutely one of the most qualified men in Southern Baptist life to be a Senior Pastor of any church in this country.

As most of you know, in Southern Baptist life, when a Senior Pastor comes in view of a call by the recommendation of a Search Committee, the actual vote is most always viewed as a ceremonial and celebratory affirmation of the Spirit's leading within the hearts and minds of the Search Committee that has extended the call. Most church experiences, when it comes to a new Senior Pastor, are just that, a celebration and a time of looking forward with hope and optimism to what God has for the future. Our Pastoral Search Committee, lay leadership, and the Pastoral Staff all anticipated that our vote would be nothing less than an affirmative statement from our people that God had sovereignly chosen for Marcus Hayes to be our next Pastor. Sadly, that did not come to fruition. Our constitution and bylaws stated that a Senior Pastor must be affirmed by at least an 85% or higher vote. It is widely known that an 85% affirmative vote is unusually high. Our church voted by a percentage of 81% to bring Marcus Hayes as our next Pastor. Unfortunately, this did not meet the threshold. If all things had been equal and fair, our story would not have reached as far and wide, and stoked the emotions that it has. But what was concluded was that all things were not fair nor were they right. A portion of the 19% that voted against Marcus Hayes did so based on racial prejudices. We know this because of the campaign that started just days before by a few disgruntled people in our church.

For us, as leadership in our church, it exposed a sickness in what we characterize as a cancer within our fellowship. Our Pastoral Staff and leadership are deeply grieved and embarrassed. There are no terms to describe what has happened here other than sin. It certainly is tempting to try to look the other way, make excuses, or to simply say "people will be people". We are not willing to do that. As the Pastoral Staff and church leadership representing First Baptist



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Church Naples, we humbly ask for forgiveness from Marcus and Mandy Hayes. We also ask for forgiveness from our fellow brothers and sisters in the Southern Baptist Convention who hold to the scriptural principle that all men and women are created in the image of God, are dearly valued, and matter equally to Jesus Christ. We would also apologize and ask for forgiveness for any other person who has been offended, hurt, or damaged by the outcome of our church vote.

As scripture says, faith without works is dead. Let me assure you that our statement of contriteness is currently being and will continue to be followed by actions within our church to make sure that this sinful cancer is dealt with. Biblical church discipline has started within this local house of the Lord, and we are resolute to make sure that First Baptist Church Naples will be an example to the church at large of how Jesus Christ has asked us to go forward in this world as a light that would draw all men to Christ. In the midst of all this turmoil, the Lord has been at work in our midst, and He still is. We have hope that our ultimate Senior Pastor, Jesus Christ, will redeem this situation for His glory and His church's good. Please be in prayer with us as we seek to become the church that Christ would be pleased with.

John D Edie

Executive Pastor

First Baptist Church Naples, Florida

On behalf of church Pastoral Staff as well as church lay leadership